Mary McCumber

Mary McCumber has played a leadership role in developing and implementing growth management and transportation strategies in Washington State. Mary was the executive director of the Puget Sound Regional Council (1992-2003), formed in 1991 by cities and counties in King, Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish counties to make regional growth and transportation decisions. Prior to that, she was the executive director of the Washington State Growth Strategies Commission (1989-1990). Based on the commission's recommendations, landmark growth management legislation was enacted by the 1990 and 1991 sessions of the Legislature.

Mary also served as the City of Auburn's planning director and was the project manager for the King County Comprehensive Plan in 1985—King County's first growth management plan. She was a founding member and first president of 1000 Friends of Washington (now called Futurewise) and recently returned to the board and currently serves as president.

Interview with: **Mary McCumber**
Date: **July 27, 2005**
Interviewed by: **Diane Wiatr**
Transcribed by: **Brian McConaghy**
Total number of tapes: **2**

Tape 1, Side 1

Diane Wiatr: This interview with Mary McCumber is about the history of Washington state's Growth Management Act (GMA). The date is July 27, 2005, and the interview is taking place at the Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) in Seattle. My name is Diane Wiatr, and I will be interviewing Mary McCumber today.

Diane: What interest did you have in land use planning and growth management before its passage in 1990?

Mary McCumber: I graduated from planning in the late 1970s and was very fortunate to take a job with King County. So King County was in the throes—starting in the mid-1970s through the 1980s—of sorting through how to deal with growth and especially how to phase urban facilities with growth. So there was some legal thinking, political thinking on how to do that so I became the project manager of King County's Comprehensive Plan, which was the first growth management plan in the state of Washington. That was adopted in 1985 so it had urban growth areas, it protected rural areas, it protected—identified and protected—the best agricultural and resource lands. So, I'll talk about it later, but it was a real model for what happened.

I had worked a lot in King County in doing that, working with the cities of King County and getting an agreement on how to deal with growth management in King County. Much of the growth had happened outside the cities in the unincorporated areas. So we spent a lot of time in the 1980s with the cities on how to implement an urban growth boundary strategy. Actually, I had concluded and other planners had concluded in the 1980s that our state would never pass a Growth Management Act. We were all familiar with Oregon and we did not believe our state would do that, so we were trying to implement it voluntarily with agreements between the cities. So Joe Tovar was the planning director in Kirkland—so there's a whole bunch of people that ended

up coming up with GMA that were part of the King County effort to implement growth management at the county-wide level.

Diane: What made you think that growth management would not happen statewide?

Mary: They had tried in the 1970s to pass a growth management type of legislation like Oregon's. And we had said at that point as a state, "We care about the environment, but we don't want more controls on our cities and counties on what to do."

We passed a Shoreline Management Act in this state and a State Environmental Policy Act, and there was real resistance from the cities and counties, especially their associations, towards any sort of state legislation.

Diane: And what actually precipitated King County's creating a comprehensive plan?

Mary: It had been—starting in the 1960s through the 1970s, the county had been very permissive in allowing a lot of suburban-type development in the unincorporated areas outside the cities. That had occurred in ways that the county hadn't really thought much about and often those areas didn't have good public facilities—sewer, water, fire—so it was about coming back and thinking, Where do we want growth? What's the relationship to the cities? We're creating areas that long term aren't sustainable because they don't have that kind of facilities.

So a lot of what drove the thinking in King County—and Seattle was very supportive of this work—a lot of what drove it was, Where do we want to grow? And how do we make a conscious decision on where we're going to provide roads, where are we going to put schools, water, sewer service? So there was a lot related to public facilities—and then we were losing farmland and forestland. So there was an environmental side and then a good government side—where should stuff go and how do you provide facilities.

Diane: What role did you play in the passage of the GMA?

Mary: From the work that I did in King County—a part of adopting that plan—we built a coalition with other interests that were interested in growth management. One of those coalitions that we built was with planning directors within King County, and then we moved that to the state.

So, the city and county planning directors—Joe Tovar and I and Roberta Lewandowski, Harold Robertson—were very interested in getting the state planning directors, city and county planning directors, to think about what growth management should occur. One of the main occurrences was in 1989. We brought city and county planning directors together at their annual conference [at Crescent Bar] to get them to start saying, "If we have a Growth Management Act, what should it look like?"

That was the same time that the Governor was starting to appoint a Growth Strategies Commission so we were able to sort through from local government—and they'd been an impediment in the past—from local government to what would work. If we get a GMA, what should it look like? And we wrote that up in a clear, easy way. I think that was monumental because, one, it brought together actors that had a lot of knowledge. And it brought together actors who had been a problem.

It came out in a timely way, just as the Growth Strategies Commission started, so we had that piece. I was recruited after that to serve as the Growth Strategies Commission executive director, so obviously some of that thinking went over. Tom Campbell, who was a main player in helping the Speaker of the House, had also participated with the planning directors. I was part of that, so I got some of the main people that were going to influence how we go forward in one place. It also was, I believe, the reason why the (Association of Washington) Cities and (Washington State) Counties Association were positive about growth management,

unlike they'd been in the past. So, the planning directors went back to their bosses—one of our jokes was, "Let's see if we can do what we think we can do." I was a planning director in Auburn at the time—"Let's see if we can go back to our jobs and not be fired." [laughs] So it was thinking of the best possible and then working it within each of our cities and counties and then with the associations. Association staff—that's Dave Williams from the Washington Association of Cities staff—participated. I think Paul Parker from the counties association did. So, it changed the mood—local government, who'd been dragging their heels, got to say, "Well, what would we need in the Growth Management Act?"

Later—but I served as the executive director of the Growth Strategies Commission. I was recruited by the commission because of the previous work I'd done on growth management. So I worked directly for the commission.

Diane: And what were your thoughts when you were selected to be the executive director?

Mary: I had a lot of reluctance if I wanted to do that. I felt that I knew a lot about the topic, that I made a real difference in King County and with the statewide planning directors group. But I liked being more of an advocate for change than having to run a commission. So when I got called to ask if I would apply by a couple commissioners, I wondered and actually called a couple of friends that I'd worked on it with and said, "What do you think?" I called Joe Tovar who was my friend, who was the planning director in Kirkland and said, "What would you think if I did this?" He said, "God Mary, that's what you do, of course you should do it!" And I talked to Roberta Lewandowski, who was in King County and now is the Redmond Planning Director, and she said the same. Then I talked to my husband who is much more conservative and he said, "Well, what do you do next?"

So, I did it, and it was good because I worked directly for the commission and for Dick Ford who was a great chairman. And I live in Seattle and our office was in Seattle. I didn't work for the state agency; I worked directly for the commission. I had to coordinate a lot with CTED, but I worked directly for Dick Ford, which made for a good work situation. I had independence and was able to make a difference.

Diane: What were the highlights and the challenges of the Growth Strategies Commission?

Mary: It was a strange process because the Governor and Speaker of the House became interested all at once because of some of the dynamics, especially within the Seattle region.

Thinking we needed to do GMA, the Governor and speaker put together a very blue-ribboned commission. I mean it was done quickly. They had not put together all the background information that you would normally expect in getting ready to do a commission. They expected the commission to be completed within a year, and with limited resources. And then because of a lot of the pressure to move sooner, the Speaker of the House decided it would be wise to go ahead a get the first wave of the growth management done at the very same time the commission got initial agreement on what should be done.

Luckily, I think, because a lot of the planning directors, we were all going in the same direction; so then the commission did the follow-up. And then there was an initiative (I-547) that would have repealed the act and come in with a much stronger proposal. So, we needed to strengthen the 1990 legislation and make it strong enough to stand up against an initiative. So it was very challenging.

I believe the process and figuring out what our choices were and understanding the data and working with all the different interests was often more a catch-as-catch-can way of reacting to the problems of the time and moving really fast. I had envied—I talked to people around the United States doing this—I envied

Georgia—who went through a very deliberative process on a growth strategy.

But in the end, I think we did a much better job because of the incredible pressure to act. It was the right moment and the right set of people, and we got a great piece of legislation that I would have bet a lot of money that we never would have gotten. So, whenever states call me about what did I do on the GMA—how did I do it? It's a whole lot of luck and a coincidence in time. So it was very challenging and it was very exciting, because there was a real need to do a great piece of work and there was a lot of push to do that; so it was very fun. It was very intense.

Diane: What were the contentious issues among the members of the Growth Strategies Commission?

Mary: I think that the commission was diverse. As originally appointed, it did not include local government officials and the commission recognized that and brought city/county representatives on. I would guess there probably wasn't much agreement on what the problem was amongst the commission members. And because when you go through a process of reacting to issues quickly, you don't have the ability to build the necessary depth of understanding. So we did a good thing by dividing into subcommittees on different topics.

Then we tried to broaden the commission to bring in other people throughout the state on economic development or environmental issues. So it was a lot—not being a cohesive group to start with, with different perceptions and ideas on what the topics and issues were, and then having a very tight time frame and a very politically charged climate that they need to perform. Having Dick Ford as a chair made a huge difference because he's a strong person who had the ability to work issues through, but also had the ability to learn and change his perspective. I think it turned out very well, but it was intense.

Diane: So, tell us about the creation of the Growth Strategies Commission and why it was significant in the development of the Growth Management Act.

Mary: Well, in my betting that there would never be a Growth Management Act within the state, it was based on the state's unwillingness to set direction for what local government and the state should be doing. Say that one again…

Diane: Tell us about the creation of the Growth Strategies Commission and why it was significant in the development of the Growth Management Act. Because the Growth Management Act could have happened, ostensibly, without the Growth…

Mary: Growth Strategies Commission, right. The way it was originally—the political events, especially within the Seattle metropolitan region, caused the Governor and the Speaker of the House to believe that we needed a Growth Management Act. The Governor said, "We've studied this to death and we really need to bring the right set of folks together to sort through the issues."

And so the composition of the Growth Strategies Commission was designed to have important interests from across the state to come together, ponder, and think through what should be done. So it's a pretty traditional way of developing new legislation or new approaches. So, as the Speaker of the House and the Legislature originally intended it—and the Governor—was they would recommend to the Legislature and the Governor what our Growth Management Act should be. The original conception was that they were the thinking place that then, the state would decide what they took and what they didn't take. That was the expectation when the GSC was appointed. That was the expectation for several months.

So it was then the change in dynamics that the Legislature and Joe King as speaker decided to go out ahead—to adopt the 1990 legislation that four months after the commission had been formed. The commission

informed that part, but it had really adopted legislation a year earlier, so the commission didn't play the kind of role that you would have expected it to play.

The good news is that—again, we were going in the same direction so everything was complementary. And then the commission picked up a lot of the hard implementation pieces because you had the first phase done. So then the commission was very instrumental in putting together the implementation piece.

The commission played a role when the environmentalists filed an initiative (I-547) to repeal the 1990 legislation and put in a much stronger legislation. The Growth Strategies Commission was part of the promise to the public and to the Legislature that we have the right pieces in GMA II, if you will act in the next session. So there was a lot of—Dick Ford, myself, others—going to different caucuses in the Legislature and the different editorial boards saying, "Hey, you don't have to repeal with this initiative. We have a good package for the 1991 session that finishes the Growth Management Act."

So the commission was critical in that second phase by being able to say, "We'd thought it through, we have the second phase, and the Legislature and Governor made a commitment to pass that second phase." So it wasn't as envisioned—much more complicated than anyone had imagined just because of the timing of acting before the commission was done and then an initiative coming on top of that.

Diane: What do you think the consequences would have been if Initiative 547 had passed?

Mary: I think we would have had a very good state Growth Management Act. I mean, it was modeled on the Oregon approach—Oregon has an excellent Growth Management Act and, until recently, I had thought that they really had it made [laughs] until Measure 37 came along. Maybe they were a little too arrogant with what they'd done, I don't know.

But, what they'd proposed in I-547 was excellent—in fact, a lot of things that the Growth Strategies Commission put forward were things that were in the initiative, but that the Legislature didn't include in the 1991 legislation. So, some of the things that people complained about, what the hearings board are doing—the hearings boards are filling in the holes and there's conflict on different policies and what it means because our legislation is not very specific in some areas. The Growth Strategies Commission recommended there would be a lot of bottom-up and a lot of we'd done a good job at the local level—but it also believed it would lead to statewide significance, if the state set more standards for what local government does and that the state should be bound by the Growth Management Act.

Diane: When the Growth Strategies Commission offered public hearings on growth management, what was the reaction of people in organizations in the state to the topic?

Mary: We didn't take the public hearing type of approach. What we believed, and I believed as staff director, was you wanted to find ways in working sessions to work with different people in different locales and hear from them about the issues and talk about how to work different topics through. So some of it, when I said we broke into different committees on different topics, was to bring in people that cared about an issue within a geographic area to talk about it.

It was much more problem solving than having public hearings where people stand up and say, "You know, that's all wrong," and in a hostile audience kind of format. The format we used did reach a lot of people and people who were very interested in what we're talking about, and they could see that they were helping to affect the approach we were taking.

The problem was that it's a big state, and there are a lot of people, and there weren't very many of us

working on the GSC. So it didn't reach everybody obviously, but it did reach the major farm and forest people, cities and counties, environmentalists, the building community, and development community. So we really tried to say, "Who is most affected by this and who cares," but it wasn't a huge, big public involvement process.

Diane: We're going to go back a little bit. The question was when did you start thinking about growth management and you told us about your participation in King County, but personally when did you start thinking about growth management?

Mary: I went back to school late in life. I was 30 [years old] with four kids and went to graduate school. My main interest in planning was in communities and livable communities and historic preservation. So I was not interested in long-range, rational, comprehensive planning.

I took a job in King County on a temporary basis that dealt with the Cougar Mountain area. It was a large undeveloped area next to Issaquah, Bellevue, Renton. I ended up being the project manager of this community plan—what they were called then—working for King County saying what should happen in this area and how it should develop. And I realized there was very little direction from the county's comprehensive plan with what should happen up on the foothills—some people thought it should be a park; other people thought it should be a new city. The adjacent cities didn't have a clue what it should be; they just didn't like anything the county was doing. So we went through a very, very intense process of looking at this area and ended up coming up with the Cougar Mountain Regional Park, and they kind of accepted it at the time. I was able to implement a huge, major regional park.

We protected May Valley, which was the first environmental protection in King County, and we did agree to some—we called them villages—but some intense kind of urban development in several areas. So, having been through that process—we had a citizens' committee that was deeply divided and a lot of controversy. I realized that this was a weird way of doing business and that we really should, from the larger perspective, sort out within King County and in the larger region—Where do we want growth? Where don't we? What's the relationship to cities? I'd never thought about cities in the state. Cities were designed to be urban growth places and yet we were allowing all the growth outside the cities.

So it really just caused me to realize that we made it through a very intense political process and came up with some good decisions, but the big picture thinking of what we should be doing at the county and region wasn't there. So I became a convert that we should have more direction for how we want to deal with growth and protect the environment, and that then can be worked through at the local level. But the local level shouldn't be thinking through the big picture without any sort of overall vision.

Diane: And what year was this?

Mary: This would have been the late 1970s, early 1980s that I was project manager for the Newcastle Community Plan in King County. That's when I actually started to build a coalition of interests, of people who wanted growth management. We didn't call it growth management, but it was environmentalists, and League of Women's Voters, from development communities to cities. We continued with the coalition through King County's comprehensive plan and that supported the Growth Management Act when we did that.

Diane: What was the original intent of the Growth Management Act? And why do you think it became law?

Mary: Growth management in planning literature and what we started with in King County—we had to deal with where do you want growth to occur and how do you get public facilities for that growth. It's pretty simple—if you want to rationally decide where growth should occur and make the best use of your public

facility dollars, and not have to put new schools in the dingleberries when you've got empty schools in the city. It was a very rational approach to, How are cities more cost effective, more efficient?

In King County—it was mainly about phasing facilities, urban facilities and public facilities with growth. We coupled that in King County with wanting to protect our best agricultural and forest lands and environmentally sensitive areas. So that coupling together had not always occurred in other discussions across the United States.

So, some of that thinking of environmental protections, resource lands kinds of protections, preservation, and phasing of facilities, making urban areas work better. That, I think, was unusual.

Diane: What in the political climate in Washington led to the passage of the GMA?

Mary: A whole bunch of stuff—dynamics—sort of happened in the 1980s altogether, which I think, was what changed the environment. The trends of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s have all this unincorporated, suburban-type development without urban facilities or without adequate urban facilities. We experienced high growth rates and the economy was strong in the late 1980s.

But with the trends of spread-out development, without good facilities, and women coming back to the workforce… So suddenly we had those spread-out developments where you had to drive everyplace to get anywhere. But we also had two-person work families. We suddenly just came to a crashing mess—people were not liking what was happening. We were losing our best farmlands, forestlands; our cities weren't doing that hot; people were driving, and we hadn't put money into the road system for a couple decades.

So it didn't look that great—whereas before, it was more disguised, it wasn't in your face, but it was really in your face in the late 1980s, and with the strong economy. So people within the Seattle metropolitan region were the main push of not liking things. Seattle voters in the late 1980s didn't like some of the developments that were occurring within the downtown and passed a cap on development within downtown Seattle. So they expressed not liking what was happening, and then a couple elected officials within the region lost on growth issues. So growth became real. It's like we woke up and—"It's a beautiful, wonderful place," and we woke up and found that the direction we were heading wasn't very desirable. So then people started asking the question, "Well, what's wrong, how do we make this decision? We've got all these local governments doing…"

Basically, you could plan if you wanted, but you didn't have to prior to the Growth Management Act—you could zone if you wanted. Your plan and your zoning didn't have to be consistent, and you didn't have to plan for the public facilities needed for growth. And, when you went into court, the thing that held was the zoning code, which was usually two decades behind what the plan would be…

Tape 1, Side 2

Mary: Then within this Seattle region, we had a whole lot of cities, so everybody was doing their own thing and few were doing a good job—lots weren't. And even if you were doing a good job, and Kirkland is a good example, your neighbor could be doing whatever they wanted. And so unless it was a really terrible impact, the courts would stay out of it. So there was no agreement on what should occur, and people in the region started to see the results of that and didn't like it.

Diane: What kind of pressure was there from the public to create a growth management strategy?

Mary: I think that nobody knows what growth management is. I don't think people were saying they wanted a growth management strategy. I think they were saying, "We don't like how our region is growing, we don't

like what's happening." So it was more that the public would stand up and say to Seattle, "We don't like what you're doing in our downtown," and that they would throw out a county councilman and a legislator that people thought was popular. So I don't think there was a huge groundswell—I mean, there still isn't, What is growth management?

It doesn't make sense to a regular person, but there was a huge groundswell that, "We don't like how our cities are developing, we don't want to lose the farmlands, we're getting congested and don't like it." I think it could have been ignored by the Governor and the legislators and the speaker. I mean, they stepped up to something and were willing to go forward with it.

Diane: What models were used in the drafting of the GMA?

Mary: Well a lot of it, as I mentioned, came from King County, so it's a very similar approach to what had happened in 1985 in King County and, obviously, because a lot of us were involved with doing that.

We looked at other places in the United States. What I say in speeches is we went around the whole U.S. before we could come back to look at Oregon, knowing that Oregon had done a great job. There had been a lot of controversy associated with Oregon, a lot of lawsuits in the early years about their approach.

We in Washington and in the Seattle region, Olympia, didn't want to be like Oregon. So we looked at what other places were doing. They weren't doing much and they weren't that great. There was interest in what Florida had done with concurrency, and Tom Campbell got very excited and interested in that. The similarities to Oregon are an urban growth boundary, protecting the agricultural lands as well as resource lands. So, that approach made a lot of sense to us and so it did have a lot of effect, but we didn't start with Oregon. And the commission certainly didn't start with Oregon.

Diane: We'd like to hear a little about the other side for context. What was the opposition to the Growth Management Act?

Mary: Well, the opposition's concerns were not wanting change, local governments not wanting to be told how they needed to deal with things.

The farmers and the timber industry were interesting because the larger property owners—farming and forestry—who wanted to stay in that resource industry, wanted the kinds of things that growth management brought. They were having problems with sprawling kind of settlements coming next to them and near them—nuisance complaints, plainly difficult to the resource industry with sprawl, with roads cutting through, that sort of thing. So some of the industry—the side that wanted to stay in those industries—were supporters.

The people that were most concerned were people that were transitional, that were holding the land in the hopes of selling it to someone else. That included some of the forest and farmlands people, and also included smaller property owners in the rural areas. So the concern—"We bought this land and it's our nest egg for our children and grandchildren and you're changing the rules on us." That was there. The development community was also in that same mix as the resource industry. Some of the development community—a small percent of the development community—were very positive because they wanted to say where urban growth should occur and to get the green light for that growth to occur.

Portland had been a great example for that—of saying where growth should occur. Not putting a lot of roadblocks in the way: "You're going to be able to do your projects and not have endless delays and environmental appeals," and that sort of thing.

So some of the development community was very positive about, "Let's say where we want growth and

get the facilities that we need there and clean up the regulations and make it easier to go ahead."

Other people who had developed very lucrative ways of turning over farmlands and forestlands—the outlying areas and not providing urban facilities—very cheaply, did suburban-type development. This was a real problem to them and they were very opposed to it.

Diane: Did you see a split between Eastern and Western Washington?

Mary: That was one of the creative things that the Growth Strategies Commission drafted and got implemented. There's one overall thing that we need to do, or a couple.

We need to protect the environment in this state, we need to plan for growth and say where we want it to occur. But the commission's approach was to say that we have very different environments and especially in very rural areas. But in Western Washington too, the rest is urban—and it shouldn't be one size fits all.

We need to give some overall guidance, set some goals and some guidance and then let the local region work that through. And part of the thinking of that is not putting the same onerous requirements on—especially—slow growing rural areas. And the hearings board gets at that saying, "Let's have a hearings board that can understand and respect the differences of our state." In that sense, I think what we did here in our state had real benefits.

It recognizes that we're different, and there are some things everybody should be doing, but there should be some difference in how people deal with the issues, according to their geographic area.

Diane: When you were executive director of Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), how was the GMA helpful in carrying out this regional planning program?

Mary: There had been regional planning agencies in this region and King, Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish counties since the 1950s in different forms.

And then, in 1991, this region formed a new regional planning agency for those four counties—counties and cities. It was formed at the same time this GMA passed and the same time as some federal transportation legislation passed called ISTEA (Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act) that was a real revolution in how the feds deal with transportation. So by luck—some of the elected officials I worked for said it wasn't by luck—but by luck, the federal legislation and the state legislation, for whatever reason, reasonably complemented each other. And, by luck, the elected officials in the region had recently dissolved the predecessor planning agency called the Puget Sound Council of Governments and formed a new regional planning agency at the same time that these new requirements came into play.

And by luck, in the late 1980s, the region, because of the growth pressures—and I didn't mention this earlier, the region voluntarily said through the Puget Sound Council of Governments, "Let's look at our future. What our growth and transportation strategy should be, even though we don't have authority to implement, what do we want our region to be like."

So, they adopted in 1990 a regional growth strategy and transportation strategy that had almost no authority—the Puget Sound Council of Governments. So they adopted that—the new state legislation and the federal legislation and a new regional planning agency all came into place at the very same time.

So I was hired and came in January of 1992 with that new organization and legislation. The federal transportation legislation said you need to do all this—great transportation planning, and make decisions on what gets federal transportation funds based on our growth strategy. But it didn't give you any authority for a growth strategy and no place in the United States, except for the Portland region, had that. So we were leaders

nationally of being able to link a growth management strategy with our transportation strategy and the federal funds. So we made huge gains based on the Growth Management Act.

What the Growth Management Act had in it that helped, one, it had a lot of specific things related to regional transportation planning, and Charlie Howard, with the state Department of Transportation and now with Puget Sound Regional Council, had worked with Ruth Fisher, Representative Ruth Fisher—it's very complete on how to deal with regional transportation. So there were a number of things on how we need to plan for transportation based on your growth strategy that the region was responsible for—the PSRC was responsible for.

Then it had a very small clause in the 1991 legislation that said you had to do county-wide planning policies and the cities and counties had to be consistent with that. But the end of that section of the law said, and within counties with this type of population—and it was Snohomish, King, and Pierce—you had to do multicounty planning policies for how you do environment, economy, public facilities, all those sorts of things. So we had great leadership at the regional council—our leadership said, "We do the regional growth management planning policies, and we've already done the Vision 2020 in 1990, and this is our first cut at it." So, we wrote to the Governor about it and said, "It's us and here's our interim multicounty planning policy."

Then we went back and we reiterated that more legally in 1993. And then in 1995 we made Vision 2020 much more specific as it relates to the growth strategy for the four-county region. Kitsap County wasn't required to be part of this, but decided to join in so the growth management policy that PSRC has adopted applies to the four counties.

It got people thinking. It got people to think regionally on the growth strategy and the transportation strategy, and then they went to the local level to implement it. So even though there isn't a whole lot of GMA legislation—in transportation there is—but on the growth side, there isn't a whole bunch that says you have to do it.

It does say you have to do something, and by having done it and having agreed to a regional strategy—Vision 2020—there's been a huge change in the region because of that. And one of the things that I haven't mentioned that happened within this region that is notable, here and nationally, is the centers approach, which is not required by the Growth Management Act. It talks about compact communities and that sort of thing, but it doesn't really say what are your major cities, how you deal with that, what's the relationship between the city and the counties, the relationship between the rural towns, to the suburban areas.

So since 1990 we have taken a centers approach of saying, "Within the urban area we want our cities to be vibrant places that have jobs and diverse kinds of housing." And if you go through this four-county region city by city, with few exceptions, you can see incredible changes that have occurred within cities because of the regional strategy—and the Growth Management Act. So Seattle is an incredibly effective city in the region and in the United States for the way the economy and the kinds of things that have happened to Seattle. Tacoma is probably sort of the best picture of saying, "Look at what's happened within a city of making it a vital urban place." Bellevue has become a city of jobs and housing. Redmond went to look at its core and said they don't have a core, How do we build one? Mill Creek built a town.

The old cities sought to revitalize and make themselves more vibrant based on the ability to do that with growth management and the regional strategy. And suburban cities have rethought themselves—Renton has built a core. You can almost—really almost—I can hardly think of an exception—but each one has taken that

and tried to make it happen.

It's slow, but it's been long enough now that you actually have the data to demonstrate the change. When I used to give presentations about the Growth Management Act in 1991-1992, I would show examples of good cities from development in Vancouver, B.C., and Portland. Now, you can show development all throughout the region of the kind of changes that have occurred. So, it's made a huge, huge difference.

Diane: What was the early process for local governments to begin their work under the GMA?

Mary: Well, the thing that we had recommended from the Growth Strategies Commission and then happened is we needed to have some incentives to local governments to come in under the act. So there were funds, grants to local governments.

Within this region—which I know the most because that's where I was doing implementing—we brought the staff in the region all together to work through the issues, to agree to data concerns that they had, to provide resources. So, there's a lot of collaboration at the staff level.

I think at the elected official level within the region there was a lot of collaboration. There was the county-wide process, and then at the regional council we had a lot of work sessions, pep talks, data—just a lot of trying to help people do their work. Trying to figure out where there were problems that needed more help or needed more resources. So, it was very collaborative.

The work that happened in the county-wide processes within these—the Puget Sound counties—was an incredible success because there'd been a lot of friction between cities and counties within the four counties. And by the Growth Management Act saying in 1991, cities and counties need to come together and agree to the overall direction, and you'll figure out the process, they—with varying backward and forward steps—all agreed to a process. And what resulted in the county-wide planning policies were excellent.

It's interesting because nobody could ever agree on a regional structure for anything at the county-wide level. But by having to do something, they were able to put aside differences and come together and do things. Since that time, since the passage of the county-wide planning policies, there have been varying degrees of success or lack of success because there's no ongoing forums, no ongoing requirement to do more. But that was a very large success—of being able to say you need to do some things and the parties coming together and sorting them out.

Diane: In terms of how the GMA is structured, what do you think the most important parts of the law are?

Mary: Well, I think the urban growth area is critical—saying where you want urban growth and the whole notion of being able to plan ahead, predictability and to get facilities with growth. Florida didn't do an urban growth area and looking at things they did, you could see what a problem that was. I think requiring people to think about transportation as part of the growth strategy and not a separate thing—but they need to be integrated—was important. And the whole notion of the need for infrastructure with growth, forcing cities and counties to deal with it—that was important.

And then, my own interest is, I think it was incredibly important to identify our best forestlands, farmlands, and environmentally sensitive areas and start to protect them.

Diane: How has the GMA evolved? And what significant things has the GMA done to meet the goals it was intended to achieve?

Mary: Well, I think it's evolved—I mean, the actual GMA hasn't evolved that much. The 1991 legislation was critical to finishing it and then what happened since has filled in holes, but there's been no major revamp or no

major taking away from it. So, it's pretty similar to what was passed in 1990-91.

I think the hearings boards have been critical to fill in the gaps of what does it mean by "rural," what does it mean by what is urban density, what's the relation of cities and counties. There's some critical decisions they've made. Since we did not have a prescriptive GMA, conflicts have worked out the issues. And I think—and looking at the updates right now that are occurring, we've learned a lot since then, and I think people are building off them to do a better job. So I think each round is looking at how do we make our cities work better, be more livable places, how do we better protect our agricultural lands, our critical areas.

I'm president of an organization called Futurewise. It's a growth management advocacy organization [formerly 1000 Friends of Washington] and we recently won an appeal to the hearings board on the first of these counties' comprehensive plans [updates].

And what I'm told is it's fairly similar to the 1995 plan and that probably was okay for 1995, but we know more, the issues are more important and the hearings board agreed that the plan had some major problems in the rural and urban areas. So, I think we're learning from experience—we have some more guidance because of conflicts and we needed to work that through, through the hearings boards and courts and we're learning to do a better job.

Diane: How has the GMA changed land use patterns in this state?

Mary: Well again, I know this region the best because at the regional council we did the data. It has urban growth areas that have not moved, or barely moved, since they were established in 1995 or 1993, and the agricultural lands, forestlands.

If we look at where we were going in the 1970s and 1980s, we would have lost most of our river valleys, and agricultural lands, in the more populated areas. So, major river valleys on the I-5 corridor have been saved because of this. Farmlands have been saved. I think it's had a real effect on Tacoma's renaissance where there's more pressure to make our cities work, more interest in making our cities work. So, I think our land use patterns have not continued to be terrible and we've started to do the harder work of trying to redevelop, make things work better within the urban areas.

If we'd done this a long time ago, like Oregon in the Portland region, if we'd made these decisions in the 1960s, we wouldn't have to go back and try to retrofit sprawling out suburban areas and messed up rural areas. We had a huge retrofit, which is a lot harder to do.

Diane: Can you name the five most important successes of the GMA?

Mary: It stopped the spreading out of development that was occurring in our river valleys, stopped the loss of our best agricultural lands within the state. We think about it within King County and what happened in the Green River Valley in the 1950s and 1960s—the loss of that rich valley. That would have been what happened in the Snoqualmie Valley and all the other river valleys within the region. I think it's made a huge change in that.

It's required local governments to work together on getting agreement on regional strategy and complementing each other on making things compatible between jurisdictions. That's two [laughs].

I think it's been a major push to make our cities more livable places. Some of that has changed naturally—the markets changed and cities are more desirable places in the last few years. But I think our Growth Management Act put the emphasis back to what do we want our cities and towns to be like. So our livable communities or things that we want to occur—I think if you start naming our cities and towns, they're

better places—Seattle, Tacoma, Olympia, Vancouver, Redmond, Everett are working through their problems, that's a huge change.

Tape 2, Side 1

Diane: You've spoken of this a little bit, but how has the GMA shaped various communities and give some examples of how the GMA is working well at the local level.

Mary: Well, they're required within each county that the cities and the county come together and sort out where growth should occur and how. So you have to up front think about that.

Then it requires, within the city, to sort through how to make it happen. So, in Seattle they went through thinking through the kind of employment growth they wanted in the downtown. And then they went through what are the major centers within the city and how to make those places work better—more vital, and encourage development to occur. And, currently, what they're doing right now within the downtown is how do we get more housing within the downtown. So, you can go to the different communities within the city and see—and they did that bottom-up within each neighborhood and see the kind of changes.

I live on Queen Anne and there are significant changes that have occurred to implement that growth strategy. Bellevue is a phenomenal example. They started before the Growth Management Act to think—they were a suburban residential area and a shopping mall when I was young—they start thinking what is their downtown, what's the rules, and they made the changes to become an employment center and have now worked through being a housing center.

Those kinds of decisions of those growth strategies—where you want jobs and housing—make a transportation system work better. So, the success—the long-term success—of the Sound Transit within the region will have much better opportunity for success because of those development patterns.

I think I mentioned Mill Creek started from scratch and they started to say what kind of town center do we want? How do you combine it with housing? How do you make it walkable? How to make a place that has access to other services? How do we make places that people want to be in that are lively, vital places and also from the transportation side, how can we make it so you don't have to get in your car and drive around to each place?

Diane: What do you, or your organization, which would be Futurewise, view growth management today?

Mary: I'll do it for me, not for Futurewise. I see it as having accomplished a lot, an incredible amount. We need to be able to tell our success and what's happened.

We need to find ways to connect throughout the state with our communities, our residents, on what it is we're trying to do—what we have achieved and what we're trying to achieve. I think we have failed miserably, at all levels, in being able to articulate what it's about and why it meets the values of what the people in the state want.

When you look at the polls of what people want, I can hardly ever think of one that doesn't say this, people value a healthy environment and clean water and air. They value the environment, the ability to have beautiful mountains and the Puget Sound. They value their community, that it is a safe place with schools nearby.

So, everything the Growth Management Act has stood for and has tried to implement—those are all the issues, the same issues, and yet we have not successfully connected our language and accomplishments with what people care about. It's been perceived as pretty bureaucratic and people can't really see the results. So,

I think it's a lot about how we talk about the issue, how we work with people, how we connect with people. I think we're at a place that that has to happen and, I think, we're at a place of really taking the next move forward—we've done the easy stuff; I mean an urban growth boundary is pretty simple.

Now, it's how do we do—the stuff that's happening with the Cascade Land Conservancy. How do we permanently preserve some of those best outlying areas so that we don't lose them in five-acre lots? How do we make our cities and towns really livable? How do we provide that there's housing for all of our residents and not drive people to have to go so far away? How do we have options in transportation so people don't have to drive all the time? So, we're in the hard stuff and if we don't connect better with our base, our communities and our residents, they're not going to think it's worth it. So, I think we have a real challenge to better demonstrate what could happen and to engage people in what needs to happen next.

Diane: Since you have an environmental bent, will you speak a little bit to environmentalists' roles in creating the GMA?

Mary: The environmentalists had pushed at us—when I was in King County and we were doing the King County Comprehensive Plan in the 1980s. They had really made the county planners and the county executives aware that what we did in phasing growth and facilities often affects the environment. So, that was very helpful for that kind of push.

The environmentalists wanted a growth management act and were concerned with lots of environmentally sensitive lands in the state and agricultural lands and forestlands. So, I'm sure they were part of pushing that. They were concerned about making sure they were on the commission. Rod Brown represented the environmental community on the commission and worked very well with the commission and the issues. So, they were a major force for getting people to think about the need for a growth management act and the scope.

The Speaker of the House and, of course, the Legislature were interested in adopting legislation a year early. I'm just told of this secondhand, but there were a lot of discussions—in the environmental community, what environmental concerns in particular that if they pass that they wouldn't go forward with an environmental initiative. So the environmentalists threatened, probably in 1989, that they would go forward with the environmental initiative. So there was a lot of working between the environmental community and the Legislature, I'm told, on what needed to occur in the 1990 legislation.

The WEC (Washington Environmental Council) and Dave Bricklin was a major player—decided after the 1990 legislation—was concerned that what would had been done might not have been adequate and the Growth Strategies Commission may not address the environmental concerns that they had in the next wave. So, they went ahead and worked through an initiative (I-547) that came out in the summer of 1990 to go to the voters in November of 1990.

What it did for us at the commission, staff and the commission members, was really to say, "What is there in this initiative the environmentalists are proposing that is really critical that should come into our recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature?" So, as a staff person, I believe that they pushed the envelope in getting the commission to, even more seriously, look at the environmental component of what that they were proposing. So we really as staff went and said, "Okay, if they're saying that, let's see if that makes sense and see if we can get it into the Growth Strategies Commission's recommendations." So, I think that the environmentalists, by pushing hard at the Legislature in 1989, having an initiative that was in play

at the same time the Growth Strategies Commission was finishing its work and going back to the Governor and the Legislature—I think it significantly increased—improved the environmental recommendations that came forward. So I think it had a very, very positive effect on the substance of what ended up in the Growth Management Act.

It made it messier because you were often talking about why the Growth Strategies Commission's second phase that finished the Growth Management Act worked—but maybe that caught people's interest too. And then when the initiative got defeated you didn't know if it got defeated because people—because the government and Legislature said, "Yes, we'll act." Did they believe them or were they really against growth management and would the Legislature do what it needs to do in the 1991 session. The good part, and Dick Ford did quite a bit of this, was to get the commitment from the legislative leadership that they would act. So, it was hard to back down and stuff got hard in the 1991 session. I think they significantly improved the quality of the Growth Management Act.

Diane: You spoke a little bit about the growth management hearings boards when you mentioned the recent case in Thurston County. How well do you think the boards are doing in carrying out their duties?

Mary: The hearings boards were created in a reaction to what had happened in Oregon. In Oregon you had a state agency that had a lot of authority over whether local plans were let to act or not, and then your appeals went into court. So in the 1970s what we were hearing in Washington was a lot of litigation occurring in Oregon.

So the hearings board were a lot about realizing that you wanted to—this is Dick Ford's presumption of validity—presume that local government has done a good job unless it's proven otherwise. So you want to assume they've got goals and things that they need to do and you want to assume that they've done a good job; and that was a lot of how we got the government in being positive about a growth management act. But there are goals that are different—we want to protect the environment and we want a strong economy—you have different things that, depending on how you deal with them, are in conflict with each other.

And then there are things within GMA that weren't clear what it meant. What's a "rural density"? How do you protect critical areas within urban areas?

So the hearings boards were seen as the problem solving sort of place that you didn't have to have an attorney to bring a case. It was a way that different parties could come to the table and work through an issue, where hearings board members with different talents and perspectives and by having three regional boards recognize the state's diverse region. So, I think it was a great idea and I think that the conflict that they've had is more a conflict with the Legislature's unwillingness to have a strong, clear Growth Management Act, and they've had to fill those gaps.

Somebody has to resolve them and it's a lot better to have the hearings board than a court. So, I think—in fact I've been asking recently for information on how many plans are being updated and amendments planned? How many have been appealed to the hearings board and then how many of those go to court? Because most things are resolved by a hearings board in a problem-solving type of atmosphere; they've been indispensable and I think they've done a phenomenal job.

Diane: Does it make sense to you that there are three separate boards rather than one?

Mary: I had a lot of concerns about having three separate boards, feeling that you wouldn't want to have real different approaches. But what I understand is that their work is compatible, and they're working on the same

things. And they're not inconsistent with each other and if there were major inconsistencies those would go on up into the state Supreme Court and then that would be case law for everybody to deal with. So, having that ability to resolve things, if they were really out of sync with each other, you would keep appealing and go to the state Supreme Court and work it through. So, I think it was a good approach.

I wish there was more cataloguing, more information—I'm speaking now as the president of Futurewise—I wish there was more information about what was happening within the three hearings boards and comparisons, and what cases they're doing and how those cases have been dealt with and other hearings board situations. So I think that there's some, almost bookkeeping kind of stuff, that would be helpful for us to look at and say let's inspect it.

Diane: Do you have anything else that you'd like to talk about?

Mary: I think that's it [laughs].

Diane: Well, thank you so much.